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Women and Class in Japanese History

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Acknowledgments

This volume marks an important moment not only in the study of gender and women in Japanese society, but also in the development of collaborative efforts between Japanese and Western scholars on the subject. It is an outgrowth of several years of international seminars held in Japan and in the United States among scholars of various disciplines, whose shared objective has been to promote a better understanding of historical constructions of gender in Japan. The Ann Arbor conference, organized by Hitomi Tonomura on the U.S. side, was a component of a larger, ongoing Gender and Culture Project inaugurated in 1990 by Wakita Haruko, who was also the organizer of this conference on the Japanese side. Conferences held in Japan from 1991 through 1993, which many of the Ann Arbor conference participants also attended, led to the publication of an essay collection, *Jendaa no Nihonshi* (Gender in Japanese History), in Japanese in 1994. Anne Walthall joined the two conference organizers as an editor to share the responsibility of bringing the present volume to fruition.

The chapters in this volume are based on presentations that were given at the University of Michigan in late December 1991, by thirteen Japanese, seven American, two Canadian, and two Australian scholars. They had traveled to the snow-bound Ann Arbor campus to participate in a four-day conference on "Female and Male Role Sharing in Japan." Apart from those participants whose papers appear in this volume, the Japan specialists included (in the order of panel appearance) Ronald P. Toby, Helen Hardacre, Paul Groner, Thomas Keirstead, Suzanne Gay, Gary Leupp, Mary C. Brinton, Kathleen Uno, Miriam Silverberg, Marilyn Ivy, Margaret Lock, Fujime Yuki, Iwahori Yoko, Hirota Masaki, Ueno Chizuko, and Jennifer Robertson. Unfortunately, Barbara Ruch was forced to cancel her participation at the

55. Little has been written about the historical significance of the concept and practice of virginity. Christen Hastrup provides a comparative discussion of virginity as a biological category that is integrated into the social and cultural construction of the position of women. See her "The Semantics of Biology: Virginity," in Shirley Ardener, ed., *Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 49–65.
56. Karen A. Smyers states that at the beginning of Japan's state-making period "virginity" signified a woman's spiritual state. Even a pregnant woman could be virgin. The requirement of virginity for women to be possessed by deities did not emerge until a few centuries after the compilation of the *Kojiki* in the eighth century. See her "Women and Shinto: The Relation between Purity and Pollution," *Japanese Religions* 12.4 (July 1983): 11.
57. Evidence of this is abundant for premodern Japan. Luis Frois, a European in Japan at the end of the sixteenth century, was struck by this lack of concern, in contrast to that of his home society, and noted it in his writing (cited in Amino, *Ikei no ōken*, 73n.25).

Imagining Working Women in Early Modern Japan

YOKOTA Fuyuhiko

Translated by Mariko Asano TAMANOI

It is generally assumed that the status of women was low in early modern Japanese society, owing to the formation of status and feudal systems that maintained patriarchy. Commonly held views of women's history argue that Japanese women's status had been higher in the ancient period owing to the matrilineal system then in effect. The establishment of private property, the class system, and the house (*ie*) system gradually brought it down. During the Tokugawa period, it reached its nadir, but the emergence of modern women's movements restored women to a higher status, a trend that continues today.[1]

Rethinking the *Greater Learning for Women*

The most visible culprit that has helped to promote this negative assessment of the Tokugawa period is *Onna daigaku* (Greater Learning for Women), a widely circulated moralistic text attributed to Kaibara Ekken. Dating from the early eighteenth century, it encapsulates the discourse that subordinates women to their husbands (and/or their houses) and entraps them within the home, based on a gendered division of labor for housework, reproduction, and child rearing. According to the text, a woman should think of "her husband's house as her own" and "obey her husband as her master." A woman should be mindful of the seven reasons for which a man might divorce her, including disobedience, infertility, and talkativeness. The text advises a woman "not to go out needlessly, but to stay at home to sew clothes for her parents-in-law, fix meals, serve her husband, wash and fold clothes, sweep the floor, and rear children."[2] This clearly worded text has often tempted modern writers to characterize women's status as low for the entire two and a half centuries of the Tokugawa period.

In contrast to this conventional assessment of the status of women in early modern Japan, more recent studies have revealed that women participated not only in housework and child rearing but in various forms of socially productive labor. As a result, they have argued that an important gap existed between discourse and practice.[3]

What, then, is the relationship between these recent images of women as producers and the supposedly dominant discourse seen in *Greater Learning for Women*? One way of explaining it has been to assume that women as producers and women represented in the dominant discourse come from distinctly different social, chronological, and discursive origins. First, in terms of class, the images found in this text might be considered representations of women from either the warrior or the urban upper classes; commoner women who actually worked at various kinds of occupations led very different lives. The second explanation points to issues of historical periodization. During the seventeenth century, women may have existed in the state depicted in *Greater Learning for Women*, but by the last half of the early modern period it appears that this situation may have broken down as women came to participate in the work force. It has been confirmed, however, that even ordinary farm women in peasant villages read *Greater Learning for Women*, and by the time it was disseminated in the middle of the early modern period various kinds of work that precluded women being shut up inside the house had already become widespread.[4] The third explanation makes a distinction between the legal system and ideology, on the one hand, and actual practice on the other.

The two need not, however, be seen as contradictory. Drawing on the findings in the field of Japanese ethnology, we can reevaluate women's labor in terms of its contribution to the cooperative management of the household by both wife and husband and use this reappraisal to read what in *Greater Learning for Women* is termed "instructions given to domestic servants" as, in modern parlance, the authority of the housewife. What we find in addition is that women were engaged in a wide variety of work even in the formative stages of the early modern period and that these experiences never confined them solely to the house. At the same time, *Greater Learning for Women* was relevant to the lives of commoner women. Women's work developed basically in tandem with it, and the issue lies in understanding how they were articulated together.

It must be pointed out that the text we know as *Greater Learning for Women* is one that has been taken out of context. Up to the present day, no one has paid any attention to the fact that it was first published as one section of *Onna daigaku takara bako* (A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women), first published in 1716, by Kashiwabara Seiemon in Osaka and Ogawa Hikokurō in Edo. In addition to the text of *Greater Learning for Women*, this volume includes items related to training in literature and the arts such as poems taken from the fifty-four chapters of the *Tale of Genji*, a collection of one hundred selected poems by one hundred poets (the *Hyakunin isshu*), both from the Heian period, plus biographies of twenty-four filial children in China and essays promoting practical knowledge related to the proper care of clothing, how to train children, and what to do in medical emergencies. This text is but one example of a large number of books for educating women that came to be printed in the flourishing mass publishing culture centered in the three major cities during the late seventeenth through early eighteenth centuries.

A Treasure House of Greater Learning for Women also provides precisely detailed illustrations of practices in agricultural work done by women as well as a variety of occupations performed by female artisans and merchants—including prostitutes—under the heading "A Complete Illustration of Lower-Class Women's Manual Skills" (fig. 1). In this way, far from negating the value of female labor, the discourse of *Greater Learning for Women* itself stood on a philosophical foundation that recognized the great variety of work performed by women. To restate this position, the text known as *Greater Learning for Women* should not be read in isolation but in terms of its place within the entirety of *A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women* and as one segment of a larger discourse that sustained the publishing culture of its time.

Lists of women's occupations that came to be produced and circulated in print were not confined to such books as *A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women*, which emphasized women's training and education. I shall examine these lists and analyze the location of *Greater Learning for Women* within them in order to advance our understanding of the discourse concerning early modern women's work and the perspectives that were brought to bear on it in this society.

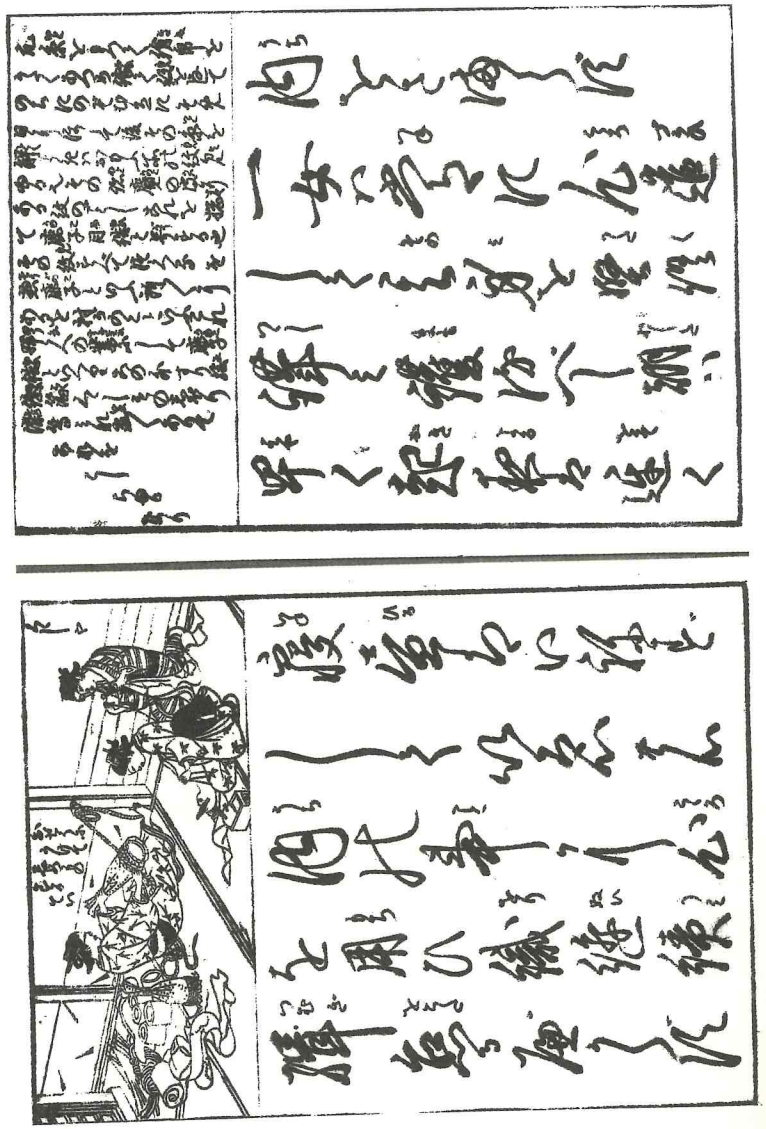

Fig. 1. "A Complete Illustration of Lower-Class Women's Manual Skills."

Historical Records that List Women's Occupations

The oldest of the books devoted to cataloging occupations is the dictionary-style *Jinrin kimmō zui* (Miscellaneous Instructions for Enlightening Humanity), completed in 1690.[5] The publication of this kind of compendium had begun with *Kimmō zui* (Miscellaneous Instructions for Enlightenment), by the Confucian scholar Nakamura Tekisai (1629–1702), published in 1666, and the 1690 publication that extracted from it the section on the four social classes. Describing about five hundred kinds of work performed by men and women, it is really an encyclopedia of occupations.

Another encyclopedia of occupations, from 1732, *Hyakunin jorō shinasadame* (Evaluation of One Hundred Women), was devoted to women.[6] The first volume describes the wives of the court nobility, the military aristocracy, Shinto priests, Buddhist priests, warriors, townsmen, artisans, and peasants in terms of the kind of work they did (fig. 2). The second volume focuses on other female occupations, including prostitution in the licensed quarters of Shimabara in Kyoto, Yoshiwara in Edo, and Shinmachi in Osaka; various types of concubines; bathhouse attendants (*furo onna*); tea house waitresses (*chaya onna*); female servants; female entertainers who solicited contributions for religious purposes (*kanjin*); and nonlicensed prostitutes. The 1695 *Wakoku hyakujo* (One Hundred Women of Japan) had similar contents. As Sone Hiromi makes clear in her essay in this volume, the service sector of the economy, including prostitution, constituted a major source of employment for women during this period, and no list of female occupations could claim comprehensiveness without including it.

In addition to these occupational encyclopedias, lists of women's occupations also appear in books belonging to two genres: educational books for women and erotic literature. The educational books for women list an amazing variety of statuses and occupations. *Onna chōhōki* (Important Treasures for Women) from 1692 mainly provides practical knowledge for women, yet in the first part there are drawings of aristocrats, warriors, townswomen, peasants, concubines, harlots (*keisei* or *yūjo*), the wives of brothel owners, and widows.[7] It also explains the different terms used for wives in each class, from the emperor's consort to the basest of outcasts. *A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women* is an educational book that includes pictures showing upper-class women's child-rearing practices and writing styles plus pictures of women sewing, picking cotton, working

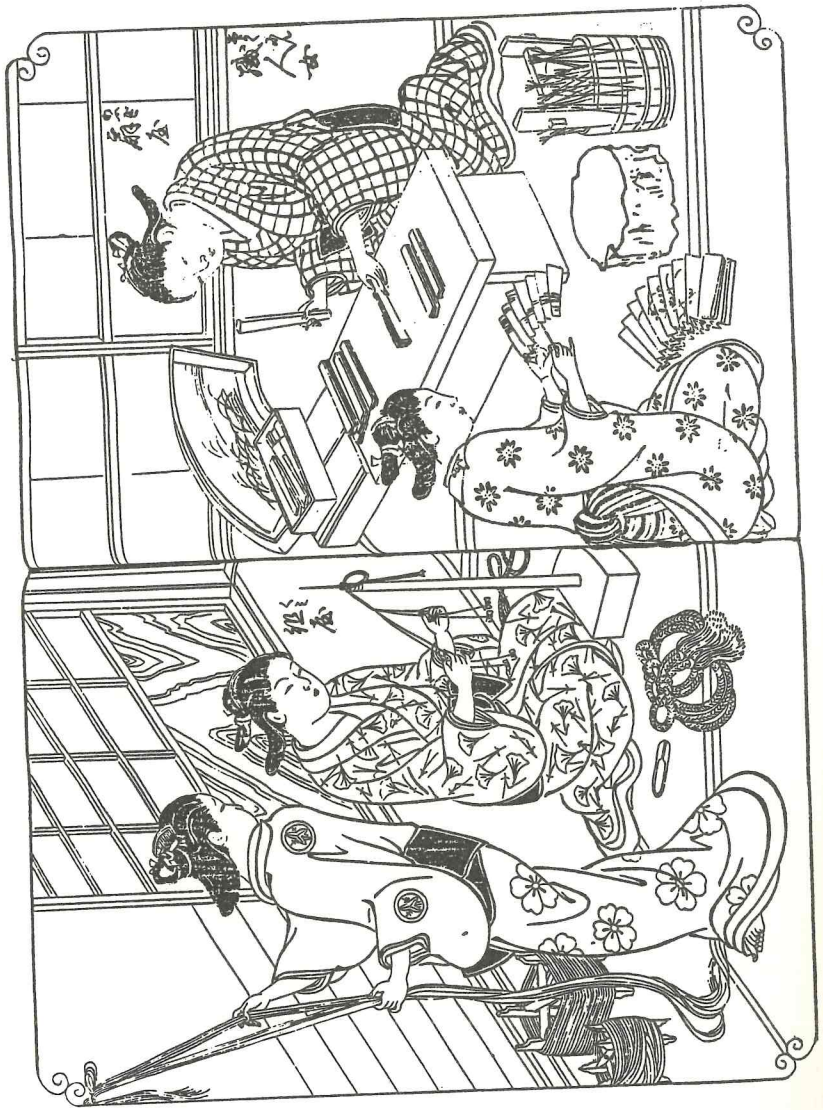

Fig. 2. *Hyakunin jorō shinasadame.*

a cotton gin, hand-loom weaving, doing laundry, and working at twenty or so other occupations defined as "jobs done by lower-class women." Although its selection of poems taken from the fifty-four chapters of the *Tale of Genji* is the main focus of another text from 1736, *Onna Genji kyōkun takarakagami* (A Treasured Reflection of Precepts for Women from *Genji*), the latter also illustrates its instructions in women's customary practices by including pictures of aristocrats, warriors, townspeople, widows, nuns (*bikuni*), and concubines plus the different kinds of prostitutes (*tayū*, *tenshoku*, *kakoi*, *hashijorō*), tea house waitresses, and bathhouse attendants.[8] The late seventeenth century saw a number of books of this type.

Another place to look for information on women's occupations is in erotic literature. The original purpose of the *Shikidō ōkagami* (The Great Mirror of the Erotic Way) of 1678 was to serve as a guidebook to the licensed prostitution quarters.[9] Naturally enough, its first chapter describes many types of prostitutes, but it also presents twenty-six occupations for women, ranging from those performed by the wives of townsmen to unlicensed prostitutes. *Miyako fūzoku kagami* (A Mirror of Customs in the Capital), published in 1681, includes discussions of the wives of merchants, various female servants, bathhouse attendants, tea house waitresses, and proselytizing nuns in the section on the manners and fashions of urban women. In its literary style, this book reflects the process of transformation from the storybooks using the Japanese syllabary (*kana zōshi*) of the early seventeenth century to the erotic literature found in realistic novels (*ukiyo zōshi*) at its end.[10] *Kōshoku ichidai onna* (The Life of an Amorous Woman), published by Ihara Saikaku in 1686, stands as one of the masterpieces of the realistic novel.[11] While tracing the protagonist's life, the novel depicts thirty to forty occupations for women, from companion to a daimyo and wife of a townsman to various types of domestic work, then female entertainer, prostitute, and unlicensed prostitute. Other books from the same period take a similar sweeping approach to the range of occupations open to women. By excluding occupations related to agricultural, mountain, and fishing villages, these novels demonstrate the urban orientation of this particular form of erotic literature. In this fashion, it can be seen that from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, all sorts of publications, from encyclopedias to educational treatises for women to erotic literature, came to include lists of women's occupations and statuses. It

would appear that in this period defining women's work had become a social concern that accompanied a certain degree of social acceptance.

Occupations for Women

In this section, I explore what was regarded as "women's work" in early modern Japan. The records show approximately one hundred types of occupation for women compared with more than four hundred types for men. The women's occupations reveal several noteworthy characteristics.[12]

In the agricultural, forestry, and fishing industries, women and men worked almost cooperatively. This can be seen in "A Picture of Farming" in *A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women* and in the descriptions of female divers in sayings such as "the husband controls the boat and the woman dives to the bottom of the sea."[13] Compared to the mercantile and handicraft industries, in which men performed a wide variety of specialized tasks, women's specializations were concentrated only in those related to textiles: spinning, weaving, dyeing, cleaning, and sewing. In the category of service industries, jobs for women employed inside the house—attendants, maids, hostesses, seamstresses, wet nurses, and cooks—were all listed as "occupations." These domestic workers were employed widely by aristocrats, samurai, and even middle-class townspeople. They were not regarded simply as "domestics" but were proper wage earners. Finally, in the category of art, entertainment, and religion, men's "high-level artistic" jobs, such as scholarship, poetry (*waka*) writing, and medicine, as well as "low-level artistic" jobs, such as theatrical performance and ballad drama (*jōruri*) singing, were recognized as occupations. In contrast, most artistic work performed by women was simply consigned to the licensed prostitution quarters; the professions to be found there were not delineated.

The central issue here revolves around what was defined as an occupation. Apart from the agricultural, fishing, and forestry industries, "women's occupations" were restricted to the domestic sphere plus the textile and entertainment industries. A closer examination of explanatory notes attached to occupational lists in encyclopedias, educational materials, and books like *The Life of an Amorous Woman* can help us to analyze these occupations in greater detail by sorting them into six groups.

1. Small businesses in which the husband and wife work cooperatively
2. Piece-rate wage work done part-time at home within the putting-out system
3. Independent businesses run by women
4. Service (mainly domestic work)
5. Service (mainly work done in cottage industries)
6. Prostitution

Categories 1, 2, and 3 apply to married couples and families. More specifically, category 1 refers to the helpmate type of cooperative work done by a couple. Categories 2 and 3 must be considered within the context of the household economy in which both men and women worked for a living, although they might also apply to women living alone. Categories 4, 5, and 6 can be defined as live-in contractual labor. In fact, the distinctions between them are often ambiguous. Servants in cottage industries (category 5) might perform elements of the domestic labor done by the women of category 4, whereas the domestic servants defined in category 4 might also be expected to provide sexual services like those in category 6. In such cases, they served as a type of concubine.

It is assumed that the prevalence of these categories varied according to the social setting and historical period. In agricultural villages, the most common was category 1, the helpmate variety involving cooperative work done by a couple, although among wealthier peasants the work force might include servants from category 4. This pattern is also recognizable in fishing and mountain villages. In the cities as well, category 1 is usually considered to be basic, category 4 being found chiefly in the enterprises managed by upper-class townspeople and merchants. Categories 2, 3, and 5 are said to have made their appearance late in the early modern period.

This way of interpreting the history of the household economy corresponds to the discourse found in *Greater Learning for Women*, which presumes the practice of women's work to be subsumed under the control of their husbands and/or the male head of their households. This interpretation also corresponds to the current assumption among academics that the reality of women's lives began to diverge from their representation in such writings as *Greater Learning for Women* only under the economic conditions that developed late in the early modern period.[14]

In challenging this assumption, I argue that as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, and certainly by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, women were working part-time at home (category 2) and serving as wage-earning servants in cottage industries (category 5) on a wide scale in the textile-related industries developing in Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto. Although the numbers were small, there also were female-operated, independent businesses (category 3) as well as women living alone and supporting themselves in the cities. A literary expression of this phenomenon can be seen in *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, in which the protagonist manages to earn a living alone in the city by pursuing a variety of occupations.

It is difficult to determine to what extent the last three occupational categories existed in contemporary society. According to family registration documents (*shūshi ninbetsuchō*) of this period, between one-quarter and one-half of the female population in various sections of Kyoto and Osaka were servants.[15] We can conclude that this percentage represents women who worked as domestic servants or in cottage industries (categories 4 and 5). Other working women were engaged in cooperative businesses, wage work, or independent businesses, some of which were probably run by widows who are listed in the registers as living alone.

Particularly significant are examples of wage work for an employer and independent businesses run by women (categories 2 and 3). In these situations, even women with husbands did not work under their husbands' supervision but dealt directly with customers and putting-out dealers (*toiya*) who were not members of their households and paid wages directly to the women. Neither can we subsume female servants' work within the context of the patriarchal household economy. Female servants usually renewed their contracts every six months, which means that they were highly mobile. The existence of specialized employment agencies for female servants (*kuchiire ya*) also points to the establishment of a labor market aimed solely at them in both domestic and cottage industry work.

It is clear that women's work had taken a variety of forms as early as the seventeenth century. For an understanding of the economic changes that made this kind of differentiation possible, let us consider the argument first made by Nagahara Keiji. He suggested that Japan's manufacturing structure shifted significantly when the materials for people's clothing changed from hemp to cotton during

the transition from the medieval to the early modern period.[16] In the medieval period, hemp was produced mainly for family and local use in agrarian villages, a cottage industry chiefly monopolized by farm housewives.[17] The introduction of cotton in the sixteenth century, in contrast, led to a variety of specializations in spinning and weaving, the development of subcontracting, and the establishment of large textile industries in the cities. In seventeenth century cities, the various specializations caused an increase in the demand for women's work in the form of publicly recognized occupations that were relatively simple forms of subcontracted wage labor or factory work. It is true that textile-related labor was considered women's work even in the most primitive stages of the division of labor. What I want to emphasize here, however, is that, on the one hand, this "women's work," instead of being done by wives to maintain their families' self-sufficiency, now integrated women into the work force, into a social system of production and marketing. On the other hand, it was denigrated because subcontracted labor was considered inferior to work done by men; it was so-called second-class labor. According to *Saikaku oritome* (Saikaku's Notes on Weaving), published in 1694, and *Seken musume katagi* (The Spirit of Worldly Women), published in 1717, men were criticized and made to feel shame for doing women's work and were castigated for not being mature adults if they ginned cotton.[18]

To sum up, wage labor and factory work in the textile industry, domestic labor, and even prostitution eventually came to be seen as publicly recognized occupations. It is for this reason that in the late seventeenth century we begin to see the appearance of published lists of occupations performed solely by women.

Social Valuation of Working Women

How were these working women depicted in the descriptions of publicly recognized occupations? Let us examine this question by comparing educational books directed at women and erotic literature. Educational books for women offered instruction in various areas of knowledge that women might need in the course of their daily lives. Moral instruction, represented by works such as *Greater Learning for Women*, was included as part of an overall education. The ideal type of woman in this text was one who engaged in housework and child rearing and generally provided support services for her husband's work, an image that fits category 1. In reality, however, in the first

half of the early modern period women were already engaged in the work force in various occupations, including prostitution. Responding to this reality, these educational texts listed all occupations, including prostitution, as items of practical knowledge, but they defined them as the labor performed by base women and labeled them a necessary evil produced by women's low status or poverty.

Erotic literature, such as *A Mirror of Customs in the Capital* and *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, depicts merchants' wives and women shopkeepers who increase the number of regular customers with the strategic deployment of their beauty. Also described are female peddlers and hawkers for whom the final price of the merchandise includes the original price of the goods plus the woman's fee as a prostitute.[19] The section on miscellaneous women in *The Great Mirror of the Erotic Way* provides instructions on how to seduce various women who are classified according to their occupations: prostitutes, waitresses, maids, factory workers, and the wives of townsmen. This suggests that all the women on the list—whether or not they were explicitly engaged in sexual labor as prostitutes—were regarded as sexually loose (prostitutelike) as long as they had contact with the wider society through their work. In this literature, all female labor has a sexual dimension; every woman is in some sense for sale. This is the reason erotic literature includes lists of occupations.

There is no reason to assume that working women in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were as sexually loose as they were portrayed in erotic literature. One of the stories in *Saikaku's Notes on Weaving* is a case in point. In this story, a female servant, who envies the good-looking women of her day while painfully fulfilling her duties, devotes herself to applying cosmetics and dressing up the moment her contract expires. Her actions, seen as "prostitutelike," reflect the dominant society's interpretation of self-realization and self-expression on the part of women who sought to partake of the advantages brought about by late-seventeenth-century economic development and the concomitant improvement in lifestyles.

Greater Learning for Women denied the sexual and prostitutelike dimension of women's work, though it did not deny the existence of prostitution per se. It thus made a sharp distinction between prostitutes and ordinary women, locating all sexuality in the bodies of the prostitutes and demanding labor from ordinary women to maintain the household and reproduce heirs. Ordinary women were required

to remain chaste; women's morality was represented in the statement that "women should always consciously maintain strict standards of modesty." This text made a clear distinction between sex and reproduction by delineating the difference between prostitutes and sexual professionals on the one hand and wives and childbearers on the other. The spatial and classificatory institutionalization of licensed prostitution quarters in the early modern era systematized this division between prostitutes and ordinary women.

It might appear at first glance that women's educational books and erotic literature contradicted each other when it came to the relationship between women's work and sex (prostitution). This seems especially true because the readership of these two types of writing was divided between women and men. If we consider how society perceived and positioned the women who participated in the work force as a whole, however, it would seem that women's educational books and erotic literature coexisted interdependently within a single discourse.

While erotic literature assumed that all working women had the latent potential to become sexually loose, the discourse found in *Greater Learning for Women* implied this in rationalizing surveillance and ethical control over working women. This is a point that must be emphasized. The essential meaning of this discourse was not to suggest that those women who were working and supporting the economy should return to their homes. It intended rather to construct internal norms of self-restraint so intensive and excessive that working women would be able to protect themselves from the accusation of being sexually corruptible. Other evidence for interdependence between these two literary forms comes from an examination of the origin of texts like *Greater Learning for Women*. These educational books were not translated directly from Chinese Confucian texts but, like the erotic literature of the floating world, were born out of the seventeenth-century storybooks written in the Japanese syllabary. In other words, the relationship between these two types of books was fundamentally Janus faced. This claim has already been made in several studies of Japanese literary history.[20]

During Japan's medieval period, prostitutes had not yet been segregated from society nor had ordinary women developed a strong sense of chastity. A division between sex and labor as well as between sex and reproduction seems to have been a product of the early modern period. Early modern discourse gave the label "second-class labor"

to women who engaged directly in society by joining the work force without the intervening layer of a husband, and it simultaneously dictated the internalized norm that chastity and latent sexual looseness coexisted as two sides of the same coin. This historically specific discourse emerged with the establishment of an early modern society that was undergoing an early stage of industrialization.[21] The structure of this early modern ideology, therefore, was fundamentally different from the structure of ideology in the medieval period and before, which had discriminated against women because they were seen as polluted. Until now, *Greater Learning for Women* has been seen unproblematically as a reflection of Confucian morality and feudal ideology. Might it not be possible, however, to see it as the first step in the establishment of a structural relationship between the "good wife, wise mother" ideology and the pervasive presence of the "professional housewife" in modern Japan? This is not to deny the connection between women's advances in the work force and women's liberation. I mean simply to call into question the point at which this advance creates the structure of an ideology that casts it under a new spell.

Notes

1. The works of Takamure Itsue, one of the most influential scholars in the development of women's history in Japan, illustrate some of the notions described here. See, for example, *Shōseikon no kenkyū* (Kōdansha, 1953); and *Josei no rekishi*, vols. 1, 2 (Kōdansha, 1954–55).
2. An English-language translation of *Onna daigaku* can be found in Sakai Atsuharu, "Kaibara Ekken and 'Onna Daigaku,'" *Cultural Nippon* 7.4 (1939): 43–56. The quotations are on pp. 45, 49, and 53. In fact, Kaibara Ekken did not write *Onna daigaku*. See Ishikawa Shōtarō, ed., *Onna daigaku shū* (Heibonsha, 1977). For the way these ideas came to be disseminated, see Michiko Y. Aoki and Margarett Dardess, "The Popularization of Samurai Values," *Monumenta Nipponica* 31.4 (1976): 393–413.
3. See for example, articles in *Kinsei*, vol. 3 of *Nihon joseishi*, edited by Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982); Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Ronshū kinsei joseishi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986); Kinsei Joseishi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Edo jidai no joseitachi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1990); and *Kinsei*, vol. 3 of *Nihon josei seikatsushi*, edited by Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990).
4. Yokota Fuyuhito, "Ekken hon no dokusha," in *Kaibara Ekken*, edited by Yokoyama Toshio (Heibonsha, 1995).
5. I consulted the original edition of *Jinrin kimmō zui*, published in 1690, in the Kobayashi Collection of Kobe University. The work was republished by Heibonsha in 3 volumes in 1990.
6. "Shoshoku fūzoku zue," in Miyamoto Tsuneichi, Haraguchi Torao, and Higa Shunchō, eds., *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei*, vol. 30 (San'ichi Shobō, 1982).

7. Ogawa Takehiko, ed., *Onna chōhōki, kanai chōhōki*, vol. 18 of *Kinsei bungaku shiryō ruijū sankō bunkenhen* (Benseisha, 1981), 1–220.
8. I used the original print of this work (first edition of 1736) in the Kobayashi Collection at Kobe University. The text includes depictions of women in emotional states such as jealousy. "Onnayō kimmō zui" (Drawings of instruction for enlightening women) was also compiled in 1687, but I omit it from the discussion here.
9. Noma Kōshin, ed., *Kanpon shikidō ōkagami* (Yūzankaku, 1961).
10. In Watanabe Morikuni and Watanabe Kenji, eds., *Kana zōshishū*, vol. 74 of *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (Iwanami Shoten, 1991), 429–78.
11. Ihara Saikaku, *Kōshoku ichidai onna* (Iwanami Shoten, 1960). There is an English translation by Ivan Morris, *The Life of an Amorous Woman, and Other Writings* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1963).
12. Wakita Haruko has performed a similar analysis of women's occupations in medieval Japan in *Nihon chūsei joseishi no kenkyū* (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1992), 178–88.
13. *Jinrin kimmō zui*, vol. 3.
14. See, for example, Seki Tamiko, *Edo kōki no josei* (Aki Shobō, 1980).
15. Tsuruoka Mieko, "Kan'ei-ki no 'Kirishitan kishōmon' kara mita Rokkaku-chō no jūmin kōsei," *Shiryōkan hō* 28 (1978): 1–4; Hayami Akira, "Kyoto machikata no shūmon aratamechō," *Tokugawa rinseishi kenkyūjo kenkyū kiyō* (1981): 502–41; Hayami Akira, *Osaka kikuya-chō shūshi ninbetsuchō*, vol. 1 (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1971). This percentage is based on the entire female population, which included a number of infants as well as very old women who were unable to work. Thus, if only the female working age population is considered, the percentage would be much higher.
16. Nagahara Keiji, *Shin momen izen no koto* (Chūō Kōron, 1990).
17. According to an illustrated text from the sixteenth century showing various crafts (*shokunin uta awase-e*), the production of hemp involved some degree of specialization in terms of production and distribution, but it had not reached the point where it allowed for the formation of an industrial society within the context of Nagahara's economic periodization. See Tabata Yasuko, "Women's Work and Status in the Changing Medieval Economy," and Wakita Haruko, "The Medieval Household and Gender Roles within the Imperial Family, Nobility, Merchants, and Commoners," both in this volume, for further information on this scroll.
18. Noma Kōshin, ed., *Saikaku shū*, vol. 48 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (Iwanami Shoten, 1980), 2:453; Hasegawa Tsuyoshi, ed., *Keisei irojamisen, keisei denjugamiko, seken musume katagi*, vol. 78 of *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (Iwanami Shoten, 1989), 456.
19. Yasukuni Ryōichi first pointed out the sexual implications of this line of work in "Kinsei Kyoto no shomin josei," in *Kinsei*, vol. 3 of *Nihon josei seikatsushi*, 73–109.
20. One example is Aoyama Tadakazu's *Kana sōshi jokun bungei no kenkyū* (Ōfūsha, 1982).
21. During the question and answer period that followed the presentation of this paper, Anne Walthall asked me whether this division between sex and reproduction existed in rural villages. I responded that this division was disseminated through the expansion of licensed prostitution quarters, which had institutionalized the division between sex and reproduction from the largest urban cities to castle towns and post stations. In addition, it is important to realize that the diffusion of the monetary economy into villages changed folk customs.

Prostitution and Public Authority in Early Modern Japan

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Literary works such as novels, essays, and verses tell us that a great number of women in early modern Japanese society had a variety of ways to sell their bodies. For too long, however, research in this area of early modern history has tended to focus on public prostitution—the courtesans (*yūjo*) of the pleasure districts—with most of the emphasis placed on the artistic or cultural accomplishments of these women. Little attempt has been made to adopt a more comprehensive approach to prostitution by situating courtesans within the category of prostitutes as a whole.

The development of research into women's history over the last ten years has shed some light on the various forms of private prostitution that existed outside the licensed pleasure districts. Police records, for example, give glimpses of how prostitutes led their lives and the conditions that informed their existence. Even so, the evidence is scanty. These were not women who figured greatly in official literature, and the conclusions to be drawn from the documentation that exists must of necessity be tentative. The purpose of this essay is to provide a concrete introduction to the various ways in which prostitution was carried out by contrasting public and private practice, to investigate the special character of the social and economic background that gave rise to prostitution in early modern times, and to examine the attitude and response of public authority to prostitution in its various forms.

The Establishment and Development of a System of Public Prostitution

This section provides an overview of how and why pleasure districts were established in the three major cities: Yoshiwara in Edo, Shinmachi in Osaka, and Shimabara in Kyoto.[1] Kyoto contained the

oldest officially recognized prostitution district. There Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98) had authorized the consolidation of brothels into a pleasure district at Nijō Yanagimachi in 1589. It was moved to Rokujō Yanagimachi in 1602 and again to the place known as Shimabara. A moat 2.7 meters wide surrounded the area. Research shows that by the latter half of the seventeenth century it contained six wards in which there lived 282 courtesans.

The pleasure district in Osaka's Shinmachi received public approval around 1610. It had been created at the beginning of the seventeenth century at the behest of Yasui Kyūbei and other concerned residents, who brought together the brothels that had been scattered throughout Osaka.[2] Its entrance was marked by an elaborate gate, and its wall was surrounded by a moat. It was said that in the first half of the seventeenth century 1,752 courtesans lived in the Shinmachi pleasure district, including girls and young women aged seven or eight to fourteen or fifteen who would become courtesans upon maturity.

The brothel owner Shōji Jinnai appealed to the shogunate to establish a new brothel district in Edo in 1612. At that time, more than twenty publicly authorized brothel districts had been created in Kyoto, Osaka, Suruga, and the ports of the various provinces. In Edo, however, the brothels were scattered all over the city. Jinnai proposed that they be consolidated in one place. The shogunate avoided giving a specific reply immediately. Five years later, in 1617, it finally approved the establishment of a brothel district based on the following five conditions.

> 1. Prostitution would not be allowed outside the brothel district and no courtesans were to be dispatched outside the district.
> 2. Guests would be forbidden to stay longer than one day and one night.
> 3. The clothing worn by the courtesans would be dyed indigo, with no gold or silver foil allowed (i.e., luxurious clothing was forbidden).
> 4. The brothels in the district would not be luxurious. The district as a whole would be charged the same taxes and have the same obligations as any ordinary ward.
> 5. Suspicious-looking people would be interrogated and reported to the city magistrate's office.

Based on these regulations, Edo's first publicly authorized brothel district—the pleasure quarter of Yoshiwara—was established. In this

confined district, the sole entrance was the big gate on the north side; the rest was surrounded by a moat 5.4 meters wide. At first, the district included the first and second blocks of Edomachi plus the first and second blocks of Kyōmachi. In 1626, Sumimachi was added, for a total of five blocks. Here, until the end of the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), on average two to three thousand courtesans found themselves confined. Thus, by the middle of the seventeenth century large-scale pleasure districts had been established one after the other in the three metropolitan cities of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto under the authorization and protection of the shogunate.

What was the purpose of consolidating pleasure districts? The second character in the term "pleasure district" (*yūkaku*) can also be read as "enclosure" (*kuruwa*). It originally referred to the earthen or stone enclosure built around a military encampment such as a fort or a castle. The pleasure districts were also called enclosures because they were designed to be special spaces isolated from ordinary citizens and their circumferences were bounded by a moat or a ditch. This is one of their most distinctive features. In the case of Yoshiwara, the big gate that provided the sole passage in and out was locked at midnight. For the rest of the night, traffic was possible only through the two small side gates to its left and right, a restriction that severely limited entry and egress. Next to the side gates stood gatehouses, called "places to watch faces" (*menbansho*), where day and night not only watchmen and detectives but two members of the secret police sent from the city magistrate's office were posted in rotation for surveillance of pedestrians. Inside the district and close to the main gate was an office (*kaisho*) positioned to keep watch over courtesans who went out and ordinary women who went back and forth between the district and the outside world. Under this system, courtesans were forbidden to leave the district after 5 P.M. even upon the death of a parent. Ordinary women coming into the district had to have a letter of permission (*tori kitte*). These restrictions gradually loosened over time, but even in the late Tokugawa period some courtesans, wanting to see their parents, siblings, or lovers, committed arson in order to escape from the pleasure districts.[3]

Most courtesans were sold into prostitution by their parents when poverty left them no other choice. Usually girls had reached the ages of ten to fifteen before they were sold, but some were as young as seven or eight. Within the pleasure district, these young girls were called *kamuro*. They performed various tasks at the beck and call of

their seniors among the courtesans. Once the brothel owner decided that a girl had the qualifications to become a high-class whore, he would have her educated, trained in various performing arts, and taught proper deportment and manners. At the age of fifteen to eighteen, the girl would be expected to receive customers as a full-fledged courtesan.

The courtesans were ranked and graded depending upon their attainments, artistic skills, and appearance, from the top class (called *tayū*), whose members excelled in their personal appearance and artistic accomplishments, to the women sold cheaply for ten minutes at a time, called "slice at a time whores" (*kiri mise jorō*). The fact that the charge for buying a courtesan differed according to rank shows how truly the courtesans had taken on the character of merchandise.

Customers who bought courtesans in order to take their pleasure with them were chiefly warriors and upper-class townsmen. In the case of Yoshiwara, warriors constituted the chief clientele in the first half of the early modern period, whereas townsmen predominated in the second half. It is also well known that throughout the early modern period the pleasure district of Yoshiwara served as a background for the showy diplomacy conducted by domainal officials stationed in Edo.[4]

The character of the pleasure district underwent a transformation when private prostitution developed outside its walls. The officially authorized brothels gradually lost the character of salons where customers came to enjoy the various cultural accomplishments of the courtesans. Instead, it became a place where prostitution was the chief object. This shift in focus paralleled a change in the social profile of the clientele. Not a few customers at the end of the early modern period were ordinary commoners such as artisans and small shopkeepers.

In this fashion, the development of private prostitution meant that the pleasure districts, which had once functioned as cultured spaces with samurai as customers, gradually took on the coloration of whorehouses serving a vast range of commoners. At the same time, the terms used to refer to the women who worked there changed. The word *yūjo* had been used from ancient times to designate not just a courtesan but an artist. By the end of the early modern period, it could be found only in literature, having disappeared from people's speech. In its place, the most common appellation was "whore" (*baika*).[5]

As we have seen, the shogunate tried to protect the privileges of the pleasure districts by forbidding prostitution outside publicly authorized enclosures. Despite its efforts, various types of prostitutes continued to operate outside. In some cases, they came to lead a sort of semiofficial existence, authorized and regulated by the shogunate, though never to the same extent as the women sold into places such as Yoshiwara.

Serving girls (*meshimori onna*) who provided tea, food, and their bodies at tea shops and inns along the highways constituted the most numerous of the semiofficial prostitutes.[6] Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the shogunate prohibited the employment of prostitutes at tea shops and travelers' inns in the post stations along the chief highways, and it severely punished innkeepers who violated these regulations. The regulations had no effect at all, however, and in the last half of the seventeenth century the shogunate was forced to change its policies. In 1678, it permitted each tea shop to employ two waitresses. Though the tea shops were places where highway travelers would stop to rest and eat during the lunch hour, some were permitted to allow travelers to spend the night and some secretly hired prostitutes. The shogunate authorized the tea shops to operate from dawn to dusk, and it permitted them to hire two prostitutes as long as they were called waitresses (*kyūji onna*). In 1718, it allowed the inns hosting overnight travelers to hire two women per inn as waitresses.

It must be emphasized that the shogunate gave the tea shops and inns permission to employ not prostitutes but "waitresses." Nonetheless, it was a public secret that these women did not just help with meals but also engaged in the selling of sex. In 1772, the shogunate issued a new regulation applicable only to the four entrances to Edo at Shinagawa, Naitō Shinjuku, Itabashi, and Senjū. Instead of two women per establishment, the shogunate fixed the number of women at so many per post station, thus publicly authorizing the hire of 500 serving girls at Shinagawa, 150 at Naitō Shinjuku, 150 at Itabashi, and 150 at Senjū.

The shogunate did not strictly enforce the restrictions on the number of serving girls. While official documents recorded two women per establishment, in reality most places employed considerably more. It must be said that the magistrate in charge of roads and other shogunal officials intentionally overlooked what was going on because the presence of the serving girls had a major impact on the prosperity of the towns and post stations and hence on their financial

well-being. The fee paid for serving girls was called the "balling fee" (*gyoku dai*) or "frying fee" (*age dai*), and the market price ranged from three to seven hundred *mon*. Since the price for a night's lodging alone was two hundred *mon*, depending on who the customer was, buying a serving girl could easily triple or quadruple his bill. At the end of each month, the serving girls had to pay the post station a fixed amount out of the fees they had collected. Every night they also had to turn over a fixed amount per customer, depending on the number of customers they had had. In this fashion, a percentage of the fees collected by the serving girls found its way into the post station's coffers. From there, it was applied to the post station's operating expenses, including the purchase of horses used for government business.

In general, serving girls were cheaper than the courtesans in the pleasure districts. Their customers consisted of ordinary travelers on the road as well as local farmers. The courtesans were permitted to wear silk kimonos, but the serving girls were forbidden to wear anything but cotton. They had to wear an apron as proof that they were not prostitutes but maids, and they were not allowed to wear fancy ornamental hairpins. In this fashion, the shogunate tried to maintain a clear distinction between serving girls and courtesans. For this reason, serving girls cannot be called public prostitutes in the officially recognized sense of the term. In formally regulating the "waitresses" by fixing their numbers, however, the shogunate created a gray area between public and private prostitution and allowed it to be filled with serving girls.

The Configuration of Private Prostitution

Aside from serving girls in the post stations and courtesans in the pleasure districts, vast numbers of nonofficially recognized prostitutes thronged early modern Japanese society. These women sold their bodies without the permission of the authorities. From its inception, the shogunate tried to extend its control over private prostitutes, but their numbers steadily increased. In the city of Edo, in popular parlance the places where these private prostitutes congregated were known as "the hills" (*oka basho*). It was said that by the 1860s some thirty such enclaves had sprung up in places like Nezu and Fukagawa.

The population of "the hills" included everyone from professional private prostitutes employed by entrepreneurs to the lowest of the private prostitutes, who were referred to in derogatory terms as "cotton

pickers" (*wata-tsumi*), "curbside peddlers" (*sagejū*), and "night hawks" (*yotaka*).[7] But what most distinguished "the hills" was that the women who worked there were not necessarily full-time, professional prostitutes. Many were performing artists and dancers who gathered at the tea houses and restaurants. Others were waitresses and tea servers. At "the hills," women with legitimate occupations as dancers, samisen performers, waitresses, or tea preparers would sometimes sell their bodies in accordance with the customer's wishes.

The shogunate was never able to exercise complete control over acts of prostitution performed on the spur of the moment by women who at least on the surface had a different occupation. In the end, it was forced to relax its penalties for private prostitution, announcing that "if women summoned to the tea shops as dancers or waitresses practice prostitution through an agreement with the customer, that is different from ordinary private prostitution."[8] Furthermore, each "hill" hired a watchman to signal when official inspectors appeared. This made it extremely unlikely that the inspectors would find evidence of prostitution because the locals had plenty of time to conceal it before they arrived.

In contrast to the women who worked at "the hills," there were "secret," "underground," or "hidden" prostitutes (*kakushi baita*) who worked clandestinely. For this reason, they tended to be the objects of suppression and punishment by the public authorities and townspeople of Yoshiwara. While considerable research has been done regarding the conditions under which courtesans in the pleasure districts and serving girls at the post stations worked, the study of underground prostitution has fallen decisively behind. Official announcements that ordered its elimination and records of court cases showing the punishments that these women received remain only in fragmentary form. In the absence of other records, it is nonetheless worthwhile to use court cases to inquire a little more closely into the lives of those underground prostitutes and their employers who were exposed, punished, and hence documented by the public authorities.[9]

In the ninth month of 1684, a woman called Ichi was arrested as she was leaving a guardhouse at the entrance to a samurai residence.[10] Ichi was the daughter of a man named Koemon from Takaita village, in the province of Musashi, bordering Edo. Having lost her father while still a child, she was sent to the nearby village of Kashiwazaki at age five for adoption by Saburōbei. Once she reached puberty, she became intimate with a seller of knickknacks called Matabei. She

promised to marry him and move to his house without telling her adoptive father about her plans. Saburōbei became extremely angry when he discovered her secret and beat her time and time again. She finally ran away to Edo. There she asked Jirōbei, a man she had met on the road, to be her guarantor while she indentured herself for four years in Edo as a clandestine prostitute. When she became ill, she was released from her contract a year early and sent back to her guarantor, Jirōbei. As it turned out, she was suffering from syphilis, and in the end Jirōbei also drove her away. For the next three months, Ichi maintained her existence by wandering from residence to residence, selling her body as she went and sleeping where she could. This was her situation when she was arrested.

Ichi's life story suggests that clandestine prostitutes can be classified into two types. The first engaged in prostitution under contract with an employer or pimp who served as her guarantor. The second found her customers on her own, as Ichi did for her last three months. Let us call the first type "the prostitution business" and the second "individual prostitution." Throughout the early modern period, the former predominated. The authorities punished pimps, who as businessmen and entrepreneurs employed the prostitutes, far more severely than they did the prostitutes themselves.

We can assume that instances of individual prostitution, in which a woman made a living without an employer or anyone watching over (or living off) her, were extremely rare. These women seldom came to the attention of the authorities and hence left little trace in written records or the lives of the people around them. Even Ichi became independent only because she had been abandoned by her employer and guarantor after she contracted syphilis. It is still important to recognize, however, that at one extreme of underground prostitution in early modern society there existed women who lived not by entering into a contract with someone else but by selling their bodies themselves. As was characteristic of the early modern stage of prostitution, this woman from the countryside was able to earn a living only by selling her body in a big city like Edo, where she had no connections. It was a society that made cheap and naked sex a commodity, even among the lowest class of commoners.

The actual practices informing the "prostitution business" are not well known. Despite the draconian punishments threatened by the authorities, few cases were ever brought to court. Documents generally disclose little more than the fact that most operators were not

established landlords but tenants. It also seems that in many cases the operators were themselves, or had long-standing connections with, men of no permanent address (*mushukunin*) and gangsters (*yakuza*). For example, in 1682 a man called Yabei was arrested in Edo for the crime of keeping two clandestine prostitutes named Hatsu and Hana on a boat.[11] In 1684, a vagrant called Iemon was arrested at dusk while he was chaperoning Shichi, a clandestine prostitute employed by another man called Gorōzaemon of Asakusa.[12] This case demonstrates that vagrants like Iemon might work as agents for underground prostitution enterprises. In 1778, one Gorōbei, a tenant in Edo, was punished for the crime of having plotted with some vagrants to kidnap the daughter of another vagrant in order to force her into underground prostitution.[13] This is further evidence that underground prostitution was connected with people with no official address and that it might be initiated in an extremely violent manner. In the prostitution business, many women were forced to work under the supervision of gangsters or vagrants who kept them either through a contract or by force.

The prostitution business was not limited to vagrants and gangsters. In one case, a sumo wrestler who had fallen on hard times began an enterprise by hiring a prostitute to support his parents, or at least he so claimed.[14] Sometimes poverty might prompt a husband to send his wife out as a prostitute.[15] In all cases, however, the vast majority of enterprises were extremely small in scale, employing only one or two women. It is noteworthy that in early modern society these enterprises could be set up with just enough capital to hire one prostitute. Operators did not need even this small investment if they could manage to seduce or rape a woman, or if, as a husband, they could coerce their wives. Because the prostitution business promised economic returns with almost no capital investment, it could be widely practiced by poverty-stricken city folk as well as gangsters and vagrants who lived by avoiding legitimate work.

The Trials and Tribulations of Being a Prostitute

Confinement characterized the lives of official and clandestine prostitutes alike. We have seen how the courtesans of the pleasure districts lived within a circumscribed area enclosed by a moat with only one large gate. This sort of imprisonment applied equally well to the clandestine prostitutes outside the pleasure districts. They, too, were constantly watched by enforcers (*giu*) who deprived them of their

freedom.[16] One enforcer might have several prostitutes for whom he performed such services as supervising their relations with customers, touting, and preventing quarrels among the guests.

Sometimes the methods used to restrain clandestine prostitutes turned extremely violent, and occasionally they even resulted in death. In 1800, for example, a prostitute named Naka, who worked for an entrepreneur in Fukugawa, ran away because she was suffering from syphilis. The entrepreneur had her brought back, stripped naked, bound, and beaten with a stick. Despite having caused her severe internal injuries, he forced her to continue prostituting herself. This caused Naka's death.[17] Such beatings were also administered to serving girls. The *Seji kenbun roku* (Record of Things Seen and Heard) describes the punishment for a serving girl who failed to attract customers or a runaway who was brought back: "They strip her completely naked, bind her tightly with rope, and then pour water over her. As the rope gets wet, it shrinks, causing the girl to groan and cry out in pain. Sometimes she is tortured to death."[18]

In general, it can be said that the prostitute's lifestyle was unhealthy. Courtesans suffered from chronic malnourishment and lack of sleep. They never got to enjoy the sunlight, they had only two meals a day, never breakfast, and their usual fare was rice gruel.[19] Serving girls were forced to perform heavy labor such as farm work or weaving during the day and were obliged to entertain customers at night.[20]

In addition to the trials of ordinary life, syphilis took a significant toll on the prostitutes' bodies. Syphilis attacks every organ in the body. It causes repeated skin eruptions and ulcers, it brings about hair and nose loss, and finally it attacks the brain and turns the sufferer into a cripple. According to the records kept at Jōkanji, the well-known dumping ground for the corpses of the Yoshiwara courtesans, syphilis and its complications were the most common cause of death for courtesans.[21] The year of death carved on the gravestones of serving girls at the post stations shows that they died on average at the age of twenty-one. We can assume that syphilis shortened their lives.[22] Many of the "night hawks," the lowest class of prostitutes, suffered from the final stages of syphilis. Among the night hawks of Edo was a woman whose spine was so bent from the disease that she could disguise herself as a young girl; another fashioned a nose from wax to replace the one she had lost. They both continued to sell their bodies.[23]

Mistreatment and disease destroyed the prostitutes' fertility, causing repeated miscarriages and finally making pregnancy impossible. Abortion doctors and medicines did exist at that time, but they often caused the death of the woman. According to a document called *Oshioki saikyochō* (Record of Punishments), in the ten years between 1679 and 1689 at least one doctor who failed in an abortion and four men who caused women's deaths by giving them abortion-inducing medicines were sentenced to death or exile.[24] There must have been many more cases that never found their way into the record books.

Naturally enough, it was not just prostitutes whose maternity was denied in early modern society. Many servants who were forbidden to have sex became pregnant during their terms of service and sought abortions when the need arose. However, it is said that the most famous of the Yoshiwara courtesans, Takao, would promenade with a wet nurse carrying her baby. This does not mean that all courtesans were able to bear and raise children. Takao got away with this only because she was at the zenith of her career and unrivaled among the courtesans of her day. For the vast majority of early modern prostitutes, who were forced to sell sex as merchandise to every man who came along, it was an absolute and heteronomous contradiction for them to have and raise a child created through a relationship with just one man. In that sense, we can say that prostitution as an institution fundamentally denied maternity.

The emotional life of prostitutes was as constrained as their maternity. If a prostitute fell in love with a man, except within a business relationship, she would be set free only if the man repaid any money she had borrowed or paid an enormous ransom. If sufficient money were not available, the two might plan to run away, fully realizing the danger involved. Elopement with the courtesans or serving girls, who were publicly authorized by the shogunate, prompted rigorous searches and severe punishments. It was rarely successful. One warrior who hid a runaway courtesan in his own house was even punished with exile.[25] If a prostitute who had run away escaped punishment by the authorities, she was still likely to receive a severe beating at the hands of her employer.

Given these circumstances, there was no end to the number of couples who chose to commit suicide (*aitaijini*).[26] From the middle of the early modern period on, records of court cases include significant numbers of double suicides. Most involve men who, after killing the woman, remained alive and were brought to trial. For that reason,

they say little about the emotional state of the woman on the verge of death. We can be certain, however, that men and women who chose to die together were strongly attached to the idea of "becoming husband and wife" (*meoto ni naru*). In 1775, for example, a young warrior of a high-ranking house agreed to a plan to die with a courtesan from Yoshiwara. But the courtesan alone died and the warrior was exiled. In discussing the particulars of the case, the man said that he had taken pity on her because she had said: "If I can't become your wife, I'll die."[27] In 1854, a serving girl and a customer in northeastern Japan committed suicide, leaving behind a pledge written in blood. Addressed by the man to the woman, it opened with the sentence: "This certifies that you and I have pledged to become husband and wife."[28]

These two examples suggest that a courtesan or serving girl committed suicide with her lover in order to become husband and wife before the gods, an option denied them in this world. For these women, a promise to become a wife apparently had a deeper and more keenly felt meaning than we can imagine today. In discussing early modern couples, Takao Kazuhiro suggests that "as long as men and women loved each other, they believed that they were husband and wife whether or not they had gone through a formal marriage ceremony. Accordingly the word 'husband and wife' (*fūfu*) signified the single unit of a man and a woman who loved each other based on the ethic of monogamy."[29] It was this sense of "husband and wife" for which the courtesans and serving girls longed. They wanted a relationship in which the man and the woman had an exclusive, intimate, and devoted partnership. For these women, the "marriage contract" meant having a commitment to just one man.

It was extremely difficult for prostitutes, who were forced to have sex on a daily basis with many men, to prove their fidelity and devotion to the man they truly loved. This is why they sent such men pledges written in blood and clippings of hair and fingernails, or even the fingers themselves, as proof of their devotion.[30] A prostitute's double suicide signified not just despair at unrealizable love but proof of her devotion to one man.

The public authorities in the early modern period called the love between unmarried men and woman "adultery" and punished it severely. Many cases from the early part of this period demonstrate how love outside of marriage was punished. One woman was executed for having had intercourse with a man not her husband, and a warrior

was exiled just for having written a love letter to a married woman.[31] Authorities thus sought to rigidify marriage relationships by coercive means, inflicting severe punishment on men and women who broke the rules. It is well known, however, that the marriage pattern that came to be established was in fact polygamous; any man could get a woman unilaterally as long as he had the money. Given these circumstances, is it not the case that both the prostitute, who was forced to have sex with many men, and ordinary women, who were forced to endure polygamy, must have desired an exclusive relationship based on mutual devotion with just one lover?

Public Authority and Prostitution

As we have seen, at the beginning of the early modern period, the authorities officially authorized pleasure districts in the major cities. What kind of logic lay behind this process of official authorization? What kind of attitude did the public authorities have toward the issue of prostitution? I emphasize first that it was not the initiative of the authorities but petitions from the townsmen that led to the establishment of the pleasure districts. The shogunate authorized the pleasure districts for two reasons: (1) consolidation of the brothels in one place would facilitate governmental control over public morals and help maintain public security, and (2) the government could realize income in the form of a fixed fee (*myōgakin*) paid by all the operators in the districts. The authorities tried to protect those who paid them money by forbidding prostitution to women who were not publicly authorized, that is, the courtesans of the pleasure districts. In many ways, prostitution was a business like any other. Like the trade in other commodities, it was regulated, confined to designated individuals or areas, and taxed.

The result of the shogunate's efforts to control and tax public prostitution was that underground prostitution, rather than declining, continued to increase. Confronted with this reality, the two city magistrates for Edo proposed to the shogunate in 1731 that it authorize six new locations, including Fukagawa, Honjo, and Nezu, which were already known for clandestine prostitution. "If this unofficial prostitution is given public authorization in a newly fixed number of places, the effect will be that the number of businesses and opportunities for employment will increase and society as a whole will benefit [literally 'be moistened']."[32] Though in the end their proposal was rejected, it is significant that the city magistrates, whose job it

was to suppress underground prostitution, would have presented a plan so apparently contradictory as to consolidate the clandestine prostitutes and grant them official approval. Their proposal clearly demonstrates that prostitution had become an enterprise that brought profit not only to many commoners but to the authorities as well. For that reason, the public authorities tried to both authorize it and regulate it.

How did the authorities control private prostitution? In the first half of the early modern period, employers of unauthorized prostitutes received the death penalty. Throughout the seventeenth century, we find many instances in which men who had employed clandestine prostitutes or husbands who had forced their wives into underground prostitution were executed.[33] By the 1730s, however, the shogunate's policy of control took on the following characteristics: (1) a general relaxing of punishments visited on men who had employed illegal prostitutes, and (2) codification of punitive regulations applicable to a broader group of people than had been implicated before. This meant that, except in particularly heinous circumstances, the death penalty was no longer enforced. Instead, the emphasis shifted to penalties assessed against property: the confiscation of land, houses, or moveable property plus fines.[34] Moreover, the shogunate no longer considered it criminal when impoverished couples sent the wife into clandestine prostitution with her consent. While penalties as a whole were relaxed, they came to be visited not just on the prostitution entrepreneur. The headman of the ward where he lived and residents of the ward, that is, people who could be deemed collectively responsible over a fairly wide area, all became liable for punishment.

The following list shows the chief punishments deemed applicable for the underground prostitution business in the first half of the eighteenth century. At that time, a wide range of people—the prostitute, her employer, her guarantor, and the provider of the site—were all liable for punishment. The fact that the customer received no punishment should be emphasized, for it is an issue still relevant today.

Employer: (1) fine based on social rank; (2) one hundred days of imprisonment with the hands bound in chains
Prostitute: relocation to Shin-Yoshiwara for three years
Guarantor: confiscation of two-thirds of his property or a fine equivalent to its value, the rate adjusted according to his social rank
Owner of site: (1) fine based on social rank; (2) one hundred days of imprisonment with the hands bound in chains

Employer's five-household group: fine
Employer's ward headman: heavy fine
Employer's landlord: confiscation of house and lease for five years

This list is based on Article 47, "Kakushi baita oshioki no koto" (Punishments for Secret Prostitution), in *Osadamegaki* (Rules and Regulations).[35]

Conclusion

It has been said that premodern societies do not make a clear distinction between law and morality. At least with regard to acts of prostitution, public authority in Japan neither judged them morally nor prohibited them in its laws. As far as the authorities were concerned, prostitution had to be regulated for the sake of public security, but they saw no reason to ban it. When parents brought suits to terminate the prostitution practiced by their daughters by offering to buy them out of their contracts, the authorities would reject the appeal because the girl was bound by a contractual relationship. They would only advise the parties involved to resolve the matter among themselves. This attitude on the part of the authorities was consistent with their attitude toward lawsuits involving contracts and transactions for any business. In their eyes, prostitution was nothing more than one type of commercial transaction based on a contract.

The advent of the swarms of prostitution entrepreneurs and clandestine prostitutes in early modern Japan coincided with the development of a commercial and monetary economy. The development of a monetary economy accelerated class stratification in both town and country by producing both a huge urban lower class that was dependent on daily wages and multitudes of impoverished farmers who, having lost their lands, could not live without a cash income. Despite their needs, they had relatively few opportunities to earn money since a large-scale labor market had not yet developed. Nor did there exist a public welfare system to help the poor. For the lower classes in the large cities, weak ties to the soil and a lack of familial networks meant that the inability to acquire money could lead to a life-threatening situation. Given these economic conditions, the public authorities may have given tacit approval to prostitution because it allowed the poorest people a means of making a living. For that reason, they accepted the argument that even unauthorized prostitution "benefited society." Thus, prostitution in early modern Japan took a particularly raw and

ugly form without the benefit of modern medicine or modern conceptions of human rights. It should force us to confront the reality of prostitution.

Notes

1. This section on the relationship between the pleasure districts and courtesans is based chiefly on Takigawa Seijirō, *Yūjo no rekishi* (Shibundō, 1965); Ishii Ryōsuke, *Yoshiwara* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1967); Nakano Eizō, *Yūjo no seikatsu* (Yūzankaku, 1981); and Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Nihonshi shōhyakka: yūjo* (Kondō Shuppansha, 1979).
2. Information on Shinmachi in Osaka and Shimabara in Kyoto is based on Kobayashi Masako, "Kōshō-sei no seiritsu to tenkai," in *Kinsei*, vol. 3 of *Nihon joseishi*, edited by Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982).
3. References to these can be found in the sections dealing with arson (*kazai*) in *Tokugawa keiji saiban reishū* (Tachibana Shoin, 1986), 1:263–80.
4. These officials, called *rusu-i*, were in charge of the domainal office in Edo when the daimyo was back in his home province. They handled diplomatic relations with the other domains and the shogunate.
5. See the section on prostitutes in Kitagawa Morisada, *Ruijū: Kinsei fūzokushi*, vol. 19 (original title *Morisada mankō*) (Bunchōsha Shoin, 1927).
6. The chief reference on maidservants at inns is Igarashi Tomio, *Meshimori onna: shukuba no shōfutachi* (Shinjinbushu Ōraisha, 1981).
7. Suzuki Katsutada, *Senryū zappai kara mita Edo shomin fūzoku* (Yūzankaku, 1978).
8. Minami Kazuo, ed., *Kyōhō sen'yō ruishū*, vol. 1 of *Kyūbakufu hikitsugi eiin sōkan* (Nogami Shuppan, 1985), vol. 1.
9. Except where noted, the following section is based on Sone Hiromi, "'Baita' kō: kinsei no baishun," in *Kinsei*, vol. 3 of *Nihon josei seikatsushi*, edited by Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990), 111–41.
10. *Oshioki saikyochō*, vol. 1 of *Kinsei hōsei shiryō sōsho*, edited by Ishii Ryōsuke (Sōbunsha, 1959), 523.
11. Ibid., 518.
12. Ibid., 521.
13. *Tokugawa keiji saiban reishū*, 1:36.
14. Minami, *Kyōhō sen'yō ruishū*, vol. 2, sec. 2.
15. Ibid., sec. 1.
16. Kitagawa, *Ruijū*, sec. 20.
17. *Tokugawa keiji saiban reishū*, 722.
18. Honjō Eijirō, ed., *Kinsei shakai keizai sōsho*, vol. 1 (Kaizōsha, 1926).
19. Nakano, *Yūjo no seikatsu*.
20. Igarashi, *Meshimori onna*.
21. References to Jōkanji can be found in Nishiyama, *Nihonshi shōhyakka yūjo*, 42–43; and Nakano, *Yūjo no seikatsu*, 51–52.
22. Igarashi, *Meshimori onna*.
23. Kitagawa, *Ruijū*, sec. 20.
24. *Oshioki saikyochō*, 217–18, 415.
25. *Tokugawa keiji saiban reishū*, 633, 672.
26. This term refers to people who love each other and die together (usually by mutual consent). Among commoners, this was called love suicide (*shinjū*), but the shogunate's public records avoid this term in favor of one meaning "dying together" (*aitaijini*).

27. *Tokugawa keiji saiban reishū*, 686–87.
28. Igarashi, *Meshimori onna*, 178–79.
29. Takao Kazuhiko, *Kinsei no shomin bunka* (Iwanami Shoten, 1968), 42–47.
30. Nakano, *Yūjo no seikatsu*.
31. See the section on "adultery" (*mittsū*) in *Oshioki saikyochō*, 90–104.
32. Minami, *Kyōhō sen'yō ruishū*, 22.
33. See, for example, *Oshioki saikyochō*.
34. Minami, *Kyōhō sen'yō ruishū*, 22.
35. Okuno Hikoroku, *Teihon osadamegaki no kenkyū* (Sakai Shoten, 1968).